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ABSTRACT

The judging philosophy form has been in use at the CEDA National Tournament since 1987, and its use at the NDT has been a mainstay for quite some time. The judging philosophy statement is a document listing a series of topic areas or common issues on which the prospective judge is to elaborate so his or her views will be known to the debate participants. Several concerns, however, have been raised about the philosophy forms. First, the coaches and students who read the statements may interpret them differently than the judge intended them. Second, being influenced by peer pressure, judges do not accurately record their prejudices and preferences. Third, the use of paradigms as the focus of the forms is dubious since judges do not necessarily follow them, nor do they apply to all debate rounds. To address some of these criticisms, the form should be revised. Information about the judges' experience should remain. Since the paradigm is creating much of the problem, it should be replaced. The form could call for broader paradigms; or alternatively, it could not call for any. Also, the form should focus not just on theory but also on specific topics under discussion; a judge's specific prejudices are important. Students should be part of the process of designing these forms. The forms should also be mandatory and available to coaches and debaters as soon as possible. Contains 10 references. (TB)

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ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE JUDGING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENTS USED IN THE CROSS EXAMINATION DEBATE ASSOCIATION

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Abstract

The judging philosophy form is a tool used to understand critic's stances on a wide range of issues and delivery in the debate context. The judging philosophy form, though still requested from critics at the CEDA National Tournament, has come under fire for being superficial and misfocused. This paper analyzes the various types of questions on the judging philosophy form used in CEDA in an effort to critique the problem questions and offer specific recommendations to improve the form. In the first section of this paper special attention will be given to the questions and directions on the current the judging philosophy form. Next, this paper explores recent research about the use of the judging philosophy form. Finally, this paper offers some specific recommendations to refocus the information given, and ultimately improve the quality of the philosophy forms.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE JUDGING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENTS USED IN THE CROSS EXAMINATION DEBATE ASSOCIATION

Since 1974 (when Cox studied the judging philosophy form in NDT) several articles and countless convention papers have attempted to answer questions about the role and the reliability of the philosophy statement. The use of the judging philosophy form in NDT has remained a part of the National Tournament, and philosophy forms have become part of the CEDA national tournament as well. Their use is not uncommon in invitational tournaments, and even high school tournaments have attempted their use. The judging philosophy form has become an integral part of the national tournament experience, but what it is exactly that they tell coaches, debaters, and the debate community is questionable.

Gill (1988) clearly establishes the problem facing coaches and debaters regarding the judging philosophy. Gill suggests that the successful debater must first understand the audience, then work to adapt to the

audience. The first part is critical, for adaptation is dependent on the knowledge that the debater is able to gain. The other side of the problem lies in this: debaters seek information from a variety of sources (peer associations, squad judging files, JUDGING PHILOSOPHY FORMS, and interaction with the critic). If the information is inaccurate then the adaptation that is planned is for naught. Dudczak and Day (1989, 1991a, 1991b) have repeatedly suggested that the paradigm statements are unreliable. The heart of the problem is this: debaters (and coaches who want their debaters to adapt) want information, but the information on the judging philosophy form is inadequate or just plain wrong. In this scenario the advanced planning (and coaching) teams attempt is subsidiary in importance to sometimes reliable non-verbal aspects of the critic in the round. If you want to relegate adaptation in the round to the understandable non-verbal actions of critics (or even worse - the ballot after the round) then quit reading now.

Status Quo - Current Judging Philosophy Statements

The judging philosophy form has been in use at the CEDA National Tournament since 1987 (Gill, 1988) and its use at the NDT has been mainstay for quite some time. As it has been operationalized the judging philosophy statement is a document listing a series of topic areas or common issues (primarily procedural) for the potential judge to elaborate (Crawford, 1993b). Judges are asked to comment on or elaborate their position or likes and dislikes on a variety of issues. Traditional issues that have been listed on the philosophy form center around topics like delivery, role of cross examination, affirmative and negative arguments, standards of proof, procedural topic issues, common paradigm, and some topic specific attitudes. The form has also asked for name, institution, position, years of judging, rounds heard on the topic, or other similar questions. The philosophy statement can be completed in one or two pages. Some philosophy statements ask critics for attitudes about tag-team debating, full source citations, reading evidence after the round, or other contemporary issues facing the

debate community (Crawford, 1993b).

A completed judging philosophy statement is returned to the tournament director and is disseminated to participants in two different ways (Crawford, 1993b). First, and most common for invitationals, tournament directors post the philosophy statements on a wall or other conspicuous place for participants to access. Second, and more common at National Tournaments, the philosophy statements are compiled into a collection that is distributed for participants. A final way of distribution, that is outside the control of the tournament director, is for the individual critic to give debaters the philosophy statements before the round. Each method allows for relatively open and free access to the statements for debaters and coaches. While the philosophy forms may be freely accessible, their value is sometimes questionable.

Common Problems Associated with Judging Philosophies

Paradigm transience. Brey (1986) suggests that the distinctions between differing paradigms may be blurred. Dudczak and Day (1989) and Crawford (1993a)

echo this sentiment when discussing the porous, ambiguous, and transient qualities of decision making paradigms. Brey (1989) says that the emergence of consistency among judges should result in paradigms, but both the Brey and Dudczak and Day studies point to the relative transience of decisional paradigms in CEDA. Dudczak and Day (1991a) give reason to the blurring phenomenon by suggesting that the paradigms in use in CEDA did not emerge in CEDA. Furthermore, just because paradigms exist conceptually it does not necessarily mean that judges follow the paradigm, or even understand them (Dudczak & Day, 1990). Crawford (1993a) offers a rationale for the ambiguous nature of paradigms in the concept of transience. Judges are expected to apply a sometimes difficult paradigmatic calculus to a series of debate rounds. Round after round the application changes, but as their use continues, so to do the standards develop. Those changes in the standards of evaluation are not always well articulated on the judging philosophy form.

Gaps in the hermenutic circle. A related issue deals with the debater and the coach that reads/

interprets the text (judging philosophy statement). Meaning derived from philosophy statements can be mitigated on the basis of three problems. First, debaters may not readily understand theoretical elements that are discussed on the philosophy rendering that part, at best unusable, and at worst, misleading. Just because the text has a level of understanding it does not necessarily follow that debaters or coaches understand theory the same way. As a coach there are times when you read a philosophy statement contending "I can take speed, I like it super fast" only to get the debate ballot back to hear comments like "I did not understand the argument you were making" or "Does the word incomprehensible mean anything to you". The point is this, just because a critic has an understanding that is articulated that does not mean that it is 'real'.

A second problem associated with the text regards the terministic screens which we impose on the message. Debaters and coaches read into the philosophy form what they can. Though they may deny a different understanding than the author originally intended,

debaters and coaches can enforce only their understandings of the text. The statements occassionally lack editing. Occasional grammatical errors may render specific passages useless.

Unreliable self-reports. Dudczak and Day (1990) examine the relationship suggesting "Regardless of the reasons for paradigm failure, the implication is to call into question the method of relying upon self-reports of judging preference as a valid and reliable indicator of subsequent judging behavior" (p. 25). Self-reports are limited from the start, because the judging philosophy form imposes certain categories that determine the content (Dudczak & Day, 1991a). However, the real problem of the self-report is that judges feel some level of peer pressure in regards to the norms of the activity that we operate within (Wood, 1992). Wood makes the argument that academic debates have normative expectations as well as codified rules. Most people are well aware of the rules: time limits, affirmative and negative sides, team debate, entry fees, etc. The normative expectations in academic debate give judges power and allow them to impose standards on the round.

These norms are a double edged sword, because they also impose standards on the critic as well. Critics are not always free to write exactly what they may think on the philosophy statement because others will read and disapprove of the stance. Philosophy forms are subject to the influence of the normative expectations that coaches and debaters place on critics. This influence plays a critical role in the self-report in that critics are likely to report those things that reflect the norms that they perceive. The point: the judging philosophy form can be nothing more than a collection of socially approved statements that judges would like to have happen during the debate, thus the self-report can be invalid.

Summary of problems. A major locus of criticism of the judging philosophy form centers around the placement of the paradigm as the focus of the statement. Dudczak and Day (1989, 1990, 1991a, 1991b) repeatedly claim that paradigms are applied inconsistently. Others, like Brey (1989) and Crawford (1993a & 1993b) concur with this research suggesting that paradigms are often unreliable. The reporting

problems related to the judging philosophy forms centers around the misunderstanding of the statement, on the parts of the writer and the reader. Reliance on self-report for the judging philosophy is a meaningful and serious criticism. Even if a solution could be found for the self-report, the terministic screens applied to the statement will ever be problematic. Normative influences also seem to inform the critic about what is "politically correct" at that point in the development of CEDA debate.

Solutions to the problems advanced above have not been readily accepted by the CEDA community for reasons unknown to this author. The standard philosophy has been without widespread revision since 1987. The form, as critics note, relies on paradigm, affirmative and negative burdens, and delivery as the focal points. The critics readily point out that the information about paradigm is inconsistent, and the others portions, perhaps excepting delivery, are artifacts of policy debate. However useful these categories may be, the philosophy form needs significant revisions and the problems can inform CEDA on the direction to take.

Reframing the Judging Philosophy - The Modest Proposal

The perfect judging philosophy form should consist of a form similar to the one currently used (broad topics followed by judge elaboration). However, the choice of topics and the degree of elaboration are the crucial changes in the statement.

What should remain? Information about the judging experience is objective and subject to little interpretive error, though a division between judging CEDA and other styles of debate may be useful. Name and association are essential parts. Directions should stay, but their focus must solicit elaboration rather than enforce the one page limit. The other category may be retained, but used for "if you want to say anything else here you go".

Replace the paradigm. If the paradigm is the point of inconsistency then replace the thing. The question is: replace it with what? Two suggestions emerge. First, the philosophy form could reflect broad paradigms that serve as the terministic screen for critics. Basically, comments about the critics' audience orientation or content orientation are the

broadest paradigms in contemporary debate. While these have polarized here, the 'real world' application of this change would dictate some elaboration on this point. The alternative would be to rid CEDA of the beast altogether. Statements about paradigms, however broad, can still lead some down a path toward misunderstanding. My suggestion is this, the paradigm as applied currently in CEDA is useless because of the reliance on policy debate models, if those models were informed by divisions in CEDA debate then I feel that paradigms could be informative and consistently applied.

Explication of standards for evaluation. The new paradigm division will work only if people can make a meaningful distinction between the two broad poles. There is not a critic out there that does not look at both issues and delivery, but the evaluation standards vary greatly from critic to critic. The form should give judges ample opportunity to explicate the standards that are used to decide issues, or the elements through which they evaluate the delivery of a debater. The form must allow for explication of these

standards even if that means a change from one page statements to two page statements.

Focus on topic specific issues. The current judging philosophy statement focuses primarily on theory. Little attention is given to the nature of the topic under discussion. The critic, undoubtedly, has specific viewpoints about the current resolution that should be shared. A statement like "I don't think that date rape is a topical case under the wording of our resolution" is a valuable insight and can be very useful for productive judge adaptation. Understanding the relationship between how this person views the topic and the delivery can also be important. For example, "If negatives run more then three disads on this topic then I will grant the 1AR a little leeway so they can slow down and explain a little bit". Granted these are simply examples, but it's a pretty intuitive leap that theory and topic opinions are both important elements of the ideal judging philosophy statement.

Make them readable - legible and grammatical. I'm the worstest in the world. There is nothing more aggravating than getting an assignment from a student

that you can't read. Maybe the print is too light, or the handwriting to too small, either way the result is frustration. Judging philosophy statements are equally subject to problems in legibility and grammar problems. The ideal philosophy statement is one that will be revised over a period of time to edit out errors. There must be some level of concern for the reader of the artifact.

Make students part of the process. Crawford (1993b) argues that students should be allowed to input into the process of reforming the philosophy statement. It doesn't take much experience to know that students are the impetus for development in theory and practice in CEDA debate. Allowing their input will make the philosophy statement more useable to them. Debaters can perform better planning and adaptation if they have the answers to the questions they want answered. Crawford (1993b) writes "the judging philosophy for must be written to reflect the issues that are important to students and coaches" (p. 19).

Make them recent. There are, on occasion, those who submit an old NDT judging philosophy form from two

or three years prior. This is always amusing since the format is a little different and one could assume that the critic has probably developed marginally different views about the nature of debate. The philosophy form, like a class syllabus or curriculum vita, should be updated on a regular basis. This seems even more critical given the above point that the statements should include more topic specific insights. Topic specific insights require that judges dust off the old statements regularly and modify liberally.

Making them mandatory. There is absolutely no reason why critics should not make known their understanding of debate. In the classroom, the instructor has an ethical obligation to answer questions about how examinations, papers, assignments, or experiential learning will be evaluated. The debate round, as an educational laboratory for adaptation, is not an exception to the classroom model. Teams should be allowed access to how they will be evaluated. This recommendation extends beyond the scope of the National Tournament as well. CEDA should take the initiative and strongly recommend that a new CEDA approved

statement of philosophy should be completed by every critic at CEDA sanctioned tournaments. This need only be a statement of recommendation and not a policy initiative, CEDA doesn't need more things to enforce.

Make them available. This recommendation simply suggests that the philosophy form should be available to the coaches and debaters as soon as possible. While the National Tournament staff has been very good about getting them to caches and debaters, it might make coaching a bit easier if they were prepared in advance of the tournament. Giving coaches and debaters more time to prepare strategies to deal with specific judges (strikes) can only help the quality of the round. There would be cost associated with the new form of statement, but this increase should be built in somehow.

The improved format of the judging philosophy statement, while still providing a wealth of information to debaters, overcomes the problems that have been waged. Problems with paradigm inconsistency and transience can be overcome by making the statement reflect on standards for evaluation rather than policy

paradigms. Problems of grammar and legibility can also be easily solved. The problems associated with self-report have been researched in terms of how rationale for a judges' vote compares to their paradigm. Again this is alleviated with reform of the concept of paradigm. Problems of the terministic screen will never go away. However, the revised judging philosophy may represent a better way to allow judges to reflect on their idiosyncratic views. Will this assist coaches and debaters in gaining shared meaning...who knows, but I'd like to think that it might.

If competition gets you excited, then a better understanding of a judges' viewpoint can only help in making better strategies for adaptation. The integration of an improved judging philosophy statement get around some of the disadvantages of the current form. Coaches, debaters, and peer judges learn from the statements of philosophy, thus the best possible set of philosophies should be made available. Without significant changes in the way that judging philosophies are written there will be problems in understanding them. Reformulation and integration of

the concept of the decisional paradigm along with other programmatic changes will improve the judging philosophy statement, and hence the quality of judge adaptation.

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